

# Nukak language

The **Nukak language** is a language of uncertain classification, perhaps part of the macrofamily Puinave-Maku. It is very closed with Kakwa.<sup>[6]</sup>

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## Phonology

### Vowels

There are six oral and six nasal vowels.<sup>[7]</sup>

	Front	Central	Back
<u>Close</u>	i ĩ	ɨ ɥ	u ũ
<u>Middle</u>	ɛ ẽ		ʌ ã
<u>Low</u>		a ă	

The vowel [u] becomes the labial semivowel [w] in several environments: in postnuclear position (when it appears immediately after the nuclear vowel of a morpheme), before another vowel, and at the beginning of the word or syllable. The semivowel [w] is devoiced (IPA symbol [ᵐ]) if the tone rises and the following vowel is [i], [ĩ], [ɨ].

Nukak	
<i>Guaviare</i>	
Pronunciation	[nɨ́kák náuʔ]
Native to	Colombia
Region	Department of Guaviare, Amazon Basin
Ethnicity	Nukak
Native speakers	700 of Nukak proper (2010) <sup>[1]</sup> 400 monolinguals (no date) <sup>[2]</sup>
Language family	<div>Puinave-Maku<span> </span>ʔ<sup>[3]</sup><sup>[4]</sup><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Northwestern Puinave-Maku<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Nukak-Kakwa<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Nukak</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Dialects	Wayari, Meu, Taka, Mi'pa
Official status	
Official language in	In Colombia it is recognized as an official language within the Nukak territory
Regulated by	Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	mbr
Glottolog	kaku1242 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kaku1242</span> ) <sup>[5]</sup>

The vowel [i] becomes the palatal semivowel [j] in postnuclear position.

Nasalization in Nukak language is a prosodic property of the morpheme that affects all segments within each morpheme except voiceless stops. Each morpheme is either completely nasal or completely oral.

## Consonants

There are eleven consonant phonemes: /p/; /b/ (realized as [m] with a nasal vowel, otherwise as [mb] at the start of a word, and as [bm] at the end of a word); /t/; /d/ (realized as [n] with a nasal vowel, otherwise as [nd] at the start of a word, and as [dn] at the end of a word); /tʃ/ (realized as [ts] or [tʃ] in free variation); /ʃ/ (realized as [ɲ] in a nasal environment); /k/; /g/ (realized as [ŋ] in a nasal environment); /ɭ/ (lateral sonorant, alternating with the approximant [ɻ], the tap [ɾ], and the lateral approximant [l]); /h/; /ʔ/ (the glottal stop).

The following table of consonant phonemes shows each phoneme followed by the corresponding letter in the Nukak alphabet, where different.

	<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>occlusive voiceless</u>	p	t	tʃ (c)	k	ʔ (')
<u>occlusive voiced</u>	b ~ m	d ~ n	ʃ ~ ɲ	g ~ ŋ	
<u>Fricative</u>					h
<u>Lateral flap</u>		ɭ (r)			

/ɭ/ is pronounced [t] when followed by /t/ and [d] when preceded by a voiced consonant. If /ʃ/ is preceded by [t] or [ʔ], it is pronounced voiceless [tʃ]. With some infixes or prefixes, /ʔ/ is replaced by /n/ when it is followed by any vowel or /h/ or in nasal [n] suffixes.

The voiced palatal allophones [ʃ] ~ [ɲ] can be considered variants of the vowel [i] when they precede a vowel in the initial position of a root or of an affix, or when they lie between two vowels.

## Tones

The nuclear vowels of nouns, verbs, and adjectives bear tone. Nukak has two tonemes (minimal pairs exist between them): high (H) and rising (LH). In the surface phonology there are also a low tone and a falling tone. The rising and falling tones are accompanied by lengthening of the vowel, however, the falling tone has been analyzed as actually being the allomorph of the high tone in closed syllables ending in [h] or an occlusive consonant, except [t] or in morpheme final open syllables. Unaccented syllables always bear the low tone (toneless).

The high and rising tones occur only in monosyllabic, monomorphemic lexemes. Multisyllabic morphemes are stressed on the first syllable.

## Grammar

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### Typology

The default word order in sentences is subject–object–verb (SOV). In any case, the subject always precedes the object. Verbs are conjugated for person. The language is agglutinative. The grammatical and lexical meanings expressed by prepositions in the Indo-European languages are expressed by suffixes in Nukak. Adjectives, which are not inflected for grammatical gender, usually follow their head noun.

## Noun

The Nukak nouns are marked for gender, number, and case. There are two grammatical genders. The plural of animate nouns is indicated with the suffix *-wɛ́n*. Case markers include the following:

accusative *-na*  
dative *-ré'* ("to")  
instrumental *-hî'* ("with")  
locative *-rí'* ("in", "by")  
genitive *-î'* ("of", "belongs to")

Depending on the noun lexeme, the vocative case is expressed by a tone change; by the suffix *-a*; or by duplicating the nuclear vowel after the root final consonant.

Nouns can take tense suffixes, e.g., *-hîpî'*, "that [masculine] which came before", and a question suffix, *-má'*. The connective formative *-tɛ́* expresses either coordination with another noun, i.e., "also", or the clause conjunction, "and".

Noun classifying suffixes are common: *-na'* (long and slender), *-da'* "small and round", *-dub* "small, slender, and pointed", *-nɛ́i* "flat and thin", *-ne* "long-haired", *-yi* "abundant, profuse".

## Pronouns

	Singular, subject	Singular, object	Plural, subject	Plural, object
First (I, we)	<i>wéem</i>	<i>wéna</i>	<i>wíit</i>	<i>wíta</i>
Second (you sg., you pl.)	<i>méem</i>	<i>ména</i>	<i>yéeb</i>	<i>yebmna</i>
Third masculine, close to speaker	<i>nin</i>	<i>ninna</i>	<i>kéet</i>	<i>kéeta</i>
Third masculine, less close to speaker but visible	<i>kan</i>	<i>kanna</i>	<i>kéet</i>	<i>kéeta</i>
Third masculine, far from speaker, not visible	<i>kun</i>	<i>kunna</i>	<i>kéet</i>	<i>kéeta</i>
Third feminine, close to speaker	<i>nin'</i>	<i>nin'na</i>	<i>kéet</i>	<i>kéeta</i>
Third feminine, less close to speaker but visible	<i>kan'</i>	<i>kan'na</i>	<i>kéet</i>	<i>kéeta</i>
Third feminine, far from speaker, not visible	<i>kun'</i>	<i>kun'na</i>	<i>kéet</i>	<i>kéeta</i>

Possessive pronouns are free forms: *wî'* "mine", *mí'* "yours singular", *aî'* "his", *mîî'* "hers", *wîi'* "our", *ñí'* "yours plural", *iî'* "theirs". The relations "my, your, her", etc. are expressed with prefixes on the possessed noun: *wa* "my", *ma* "your singular", *a*, "his", *mi* "her", *hi* "our", *ñi* "your plural", *i* "their". In conjugation, the same prefixes are agent (subject) markers. They occur either with or without personal pronouns.

## Interrogative words

*déi* ("what?" "which" referring to things), *de pán* "what?" referring to actions, *háu'ka*, *de'e* "who?", *déimǎnǎ* "when?", *ded* "where?", *jáu'* why?". They combine with various other markers, e.g., case suffixes: the allative *de' yúkú* "towards where?", the instrumental *de'e hin* "with whom?", the genitive *de'e í* "whose?". Interrogatives combine with tense markers as in *jáu' ra'* ("due to what?" + recent past).

## Verbs

Verbs are conjugated with a subject prefix and with suffixes and infixes expressing aspect (continuous, immediate); tense (past, present, future) and mood (imperative, desiderative, interrogative). For example:

Past -*nábé*  
Future -*nátu'*

dubitative -*náhitu'*

Conditional -*'náno'*  
Present

imperfect -*náka*  
 negative -*kaná*  
 continuing -*né'*

Interrogative

past -*yáa*  
 future -*pî'*  
 conditional -*no'pî'*  
 present -*ráa'*

negative -*ka*

Desiderative -*iná-* ("perhaps")  
 Planeative -*ǎí'* - ("to plan" an action)  
 Repetitive -*pî-* ("repeatedly")  
 Agentive -*ríť* ("because", "due to")

The imperative mood is formed by duplicating the last vowel of the verb stem, after the root final consonant or semivowel. The vowels [u] and [i] are pronounced as semivowels [w], [j] when duplicated after the final consonant.

The past imperfect is formed by suffixing to the stem the duplicate of the last vowel in the stem plus [p]: (-VC-Vp). The combination of the past imperfect suffix with the marker -*tí'* marks a past subjunctive: *jǎm* "to be"; *jǎmǎ* "may have been"; past imperfect *jǎmǎp* "was"; subjunctive preterite *jǎmǎptí'* "if it were".

Verbal negation is expressed in different ways: with the suffix -*ka*, which comes between the verb root and the tense, mood, and aspect markers; with certain prefixes to the verb stem; with the words *yab'*, "no", *dǎí'*, "refuse", *íí'*, "without effect". Negative commands have a specific marker, -*kê'*.

There are many compound verbs. The elements may be two or more verb roots or they may be a verb root plus a noun, adjective, or adverb. The marker -*a* converts an intransitive verb root into a transitive verb.

Verbs are nominalized with the suffixes -*hát*, the abstract idea of the action, -*pe'*, the affected object, participle. The agent of the action is indicated with the agentive ("actance") prefix and a suffix expressing person and number. The agentive suffixes are -*ni'* for the first person, second person, and third person

singular feminine; *-ni* for the third person singular masculine; and *-nit* for the third person plural. To these may be added the marker for imminence, currently in progress, or emphasis, *-yé'* .

All verb roots end in a consonant or semivowel. The meaning "to be" can be expressed in two ways: explicitly with the verb *jǐm* or tacitly through the various interrogative markers along with the personal pronouns, and occasionally with another verb, *yit*, which has the emphatic form *yittí'* , "I am".

## Adverbs

The Nukak language has many adverb forms. Various adverbs are important in the construction of sentences. For example, they frequently use *hébáká* "indeed", and for even greater insistence, *-yé'* is suffixed. The verbal link *tǐtíma'hî* "after" can occur between the subject and the object and verb. Morphologically, some adverbs are independent words; these can follow nouns, like *hattí'* "also", "neither", "yet". There are some adverbial suffixes, e.g., *-hê* "only", "precisely".

## Interjections

*Kútu'* "Hey!", "Attention!" is an exclamation said in order to begin to speak. Other exclamatory words or phrases are *hâré* "Be careful!" or *dǐpí hâré* "Be very careful!"; *waá'yé'* "Enough!"; *be'bét yé'* "Hurry up!"; *ni'kába'í'* "That's it!".

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